nyctophilia

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nyctophilia

by LupusLikeTheWolf

Summary

— a love for darkness or the night

[Or
Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter have always bonded over the macabre, and have always held a love for academia. Sometimes, these things go hand-in-hand, it just… takes some time for them to realise it.]

Notes

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FLASH <3 !!! I HOPE I DID YOUR FAV TROPES JUSTICE
and enjoy :D

// TRIGGER WARNING:
- Graphic Descriptions of Dead Bodies
- Cannibalism
- Possessive Behaviour
- Graphic Descriptions of Mutilating the Dead
- Depictions of Death (conceptual and otherwise)
- Canines Eating People
- Bad Humour

See the end of the work for more notes

There are many things that drive humanity to do what they do, though among the strongest of driving factors is *Desire*.

But even something seemingly so simple is complicated by the fact that *Desire* is human, and humanity is nothing if not complex, so *Desire* can take many forms: an ache, a craving or a longing; an eagerness, enthusiasm or determination; a thirst, a hunger or a passion.

Hannibal can see nothing but passion in the eyes of the person staring him down from across the stream.

Hannibal imagines that, if his eyes ever gave anything away, it would be hunger.

Where passion burned, hunger consumed.

He supposes he should have been more surprised than he was to realise Passion was also carrying a body bag.

"So… y'just gonna stand there and stare at me or can we address the, well, body bags we're both carrying." Passion's voice is layered with a Southern drawl, in a way that only serves to make him seem even more at home in his environment, as if he is a man who has spent every waking moment outside, amongst the wild.

"Are you sure that is what you are seeing? It is rather rude to assume."

Passion laughs, low and quiet. "That plastic monkey-suit you're wearin' is covered in blood. I can smell it from over here."

"As is the… sack you are carrying. Am I safe in the assumption that the copious amount of blood soaking the bottom of it is because you find transportation easier in smaller parts?"

"You can say I like to tear people limb from limb. It's fine."

Hannibal tilts his head to the side, dropping the handle he was using to drag his own body bag onto the floor. At least when he decides to slice up a *long pig*, it is a clean and easy process. Passion, however… it is obvious he does not use the same finesse, and preferred the mess and overt brutality. "It is not the smartest idea to go about saying it out *loud* when you don't know who you're talking to."

With his voice dripping in snide sarcasm, Passion says, "Oh, isn't it? Considerin' we're the only two livin' things around, and neither of us want to explain why we were here to the cops, I don't think I'm in too much danger from you at the moment."

Hannibal steps forward, getting closer to the rude, defensive beast of a man (because Hannibal, who perfected the art of acting human years ago, can see through the well-crafted but ill-fitting person suit Passion is trying desperately to pull together) in front of him. Passion steps back, shifting his stance to redistribute the weight he is carrying. To fight or to run, is yet to be decided.

Somewhere, hidden behind bushes and trees, in the shroud of darkness, the barks and growls of hungry coyotes can be heard.

Passion smirks. It's a vicious look, on a face softened by the moonlight, now Hannibal can see him clearly. He removes the mask he wears and clips it to his belt instead. It resembles a muzzle, and is positioned on the lower half of his face, fitted perfectly. Whether it is for a function or another reason, Hannibal does not know. His hair is pulled back to the nape of his neck, combed neatly with the fringe artfully arranged. "They can smell the blood, waitin' for me to spread the meat and let them at it. You feel like tryin' your luck, and facein' a pack of hungry, wild animals comin' at you, with three fresh carcasses right at your feet?"

"No. I am not. Though, do you think that feeding them has earnt you some loyalty? Some sense of safety?"

"I'd be an idiot if I did. Coyotes are fierce, rabid, starving little bastards. Makes 'em perfect to clean up the mess, though. They scatter the bones, get rid of the meat, and any organs left get picked off or rot away before anyone thinks they are human." Passion puts down his sack, opening the top and reaching inside. "They'd eat me if I turned up injured and bleeding enough."

When he withdraws, he is holding someone else's hand in his own, detached and crusted over with blood.

Inexplicably, it makes Hannibal jealous, thinking it should be *his* hand in Passion's, with interlaced fingers or a harsh grip around the wrist.

"It feels like something of a waste, to me."

Passion raises an eyebrow, looking at Hannibal in confusion as he tosses the hand into the bushes, and the sounds of scavengers start and stop abruptly.

"Surely if the meat is in good condition, you need not feed it to wild animals such as these?"

Passion laughs truly this time, tossing more of his kill into the surrounding areas. "I take it that is your preference? To… harvest the best of the cut and get rid of the rest, taking the prize meat for yourself."

"Yes. It is considered a waste not to do something useful with a prize pig, even once it has been slaughtered."

"Pig, eh? Why pig?"

"They were as rude as."

Passion rips into the flash of what was once a man's thigh, tearing off strips with his bare hands and a pocket knife. He tosses the meat to the coyotes, while his own arms start to become drenched in blood. He feeds them like one would feed a pet strips of bacon off your own plate, when you cook too much for just one person.

Hannibal is reminded that he has his own job to do, and turns back to the abandoned black bag that he was dragging with him, only to find three adolescent coyote's ripped it open and stuck their noses in, devouring what little was left of the obnoxious women from the store.

Hannibal can hear Passion laugh again. It's a cold sound that washes over the silence of the night in perfect harmony.

"Maybe I should've warned you. They'll eat you out of house and home." He tosses a bone, now stripped of all its meat but still covered in blood and residue, over to the three lone coyotes currently ripping Hannibal's pig apart.

"As will most hungry animals, I imagine."

"Oh yeah. I got far to many dogs of my own, and I can't put any food away lower than my hip, else they'll eat it all, even if they spend the evenin' throwin' it back up again."

With the final scraps of meat being fought over, and the bones gnawed on or broken up, Passion collects his sack. The only thing he takes with him is the heart, placed gently inside a box and kept in hand.

Hannibal almost reaches out to grab his arm, to stop him from walking away. "What are you called?"

"I am not stupid enough to give you my name." Passion drawls.

"I did not mean your name."

Now, he smiles, and Hannibal sees more than just teeth (there are fangs, rows and rows of them, too many, too *sharp* for something human). "Call me what you wish, Ripper. I would be *honoured.* "

—

When Hannibal thinks back on these events the next day, with a clearer mind, he realises two things:

The first is that he should have killed that man on the spot, not only for his impertinence, but for the fact that, despite the darkness and the shadows that morph the way one's eyes perceive things, he still saw Hannibal's own face.

The second is that Passion… His Passion wore that human suit well, but the cracks were far more beautiful, the cracks that showed when Passion called him *Ripper* as if he knew without ever being told exactly who Hannibal was. And *oh* , if that doesn't spark an interest in Hannibal's mind. One he doesn't yet know how to place.

—

Doctor - and now Senior Lecturer of Psychiatry - Hannibal Lecter is aware that he is an accomplished, talented man with a reputation for near-perfection in both academic and medical circles. As such, he was not surprised by the warm welcome he received upon his initial arrival at the University.

Alana Bloom, a former student and now a well-respected Professor of Clinical Psychology in her own right, had been the one to show him around and introduce him to his new colleagues.

Mostly, they were rather bland and unobtrusive lecturers, PhD students, and assistant professors, who make for stimulating conversationalists and dinner guests, but not much use elsewhere.

Unless, of course, one counts Professor of Criminal Psychology, Will Graham.

Everything about the man grates against Hannibal's nerves in a way he has never experienced before. He is impolite and abrasive, with little respect for tradition or hierarchy.

But even Hannibal must admit that Alana was right when introducing him as the best in his field. A mind like Professor Graham's - the perfect mix of empathy and eidetic memory - creates the grounds for psychological profiling at a far deeper level than any other could dream to replicate. No matter how many times they have butted heads and argued and exchanged passive-aggressive sentiments in professional settings, Hannibal is still drawn to watch Graham lecture and teacher and tutor as much as he can.

He will tell himself it is simply professional, scientific intrigue. And in part, it is… But there is more than the Psychiatrist in him, more than Doctor Lecter, that wants Will Graham.

But, Hannibal supposes, even Will Graham would find it rude for someone like him to attempt to befriend him simply because of a more-than-professionally vested interest in the inner workings of his mind.

In fact, when Alana had been introducing Hannibal to the other Professors and Lecturers at the department, it was Will Graham who had refused to shake his hand, instead saying, "Don't psychoanalyse me. You won't like me when I'm psychoanalysed. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go give a lecture on psychoanalysing."

He had left without even a gesture of goodwill or farewell.

If Hannibal were to treat him as deserved, Professor Graham would make for an excellent steak. A *Naka-Choko,* perhaps .

But instead, Hannibal lets the rivalry fester, lets the students laugh and gossip, and lets the faculty ask whether or not there is *something more they should be worried about between you two?*

This is where Hannibal finds himself: at the back of Graham's classroom, watching him pace as the students file in, and carefully avoiding the eye contact that Graham seems to despise so much.

This is one of the unspoken things they don't seem to talk about. Will Graham lets Hannibal Lecter know when a presentation or lecture will be relevant or interesting, and Hannibal comes to observe, and visa versa. They later compare notes, debate and argue, send scathing emails back and forth and find themselves falling further into each other's academic and personal lives with each passing moment thinking up their next argument.

"Now, for reasons yet unknown, the higher-ups have decided that the perfect new case study to introduce to you is an ongoing investigation. Because it will not at all be difficult to teach incomplete material. And they have also decided that I am the most qualified person to teach this. For some reason I cannot even begin to fathom." Graham's dry humour always coaxes a laugh out of the students who drag themselves to the lecture theatre every day, keeping them engaged and interested through what would be boring seminars.

"Let's get started, shall we? The first killer we are bringing up for today is the Chesapeake Ripper. Sort of the local legend around here, isn't he?"

Simply dropping the name seemed to wake up the rest of the student body. Even the student who had sat at the back next to Hannibal so that he could try to fall asleep had given up on his attempts so he would not miss the lecture.

Everyone at the University - students and faculty alike - knew of Jack Crawfirds meetings with Professor Graham, attempts to get him to consult at the BAU. They seemed to be in earnest, until it was announced in Freddie Lounds' *TattleCrime* that Graham had, in fact, consulted remotely on the case of the Chessapeake Ripper.

"The Chesapeake Ripper kills in sounders of three. Now, I use the term 'sounders' as it refers to a small group of pigs. It is how he views his victims: not as people, as prey. As pigs. He is methodical and meticulous at the scenes of his crimes, leaving nothing out of the ordinary except, of course, his kills. That is why he is so hard to catch. He has remained consistently theatrical over his time, and never presents in the same way twice. He wants to… perform. Every brutal choice has a certain sense of elegance and of grace.

"The diligent removal of organs and muscle means that this is someone with surgical know-how. These dissections are a form of public shaming. He is a highly intelligent and sadistic psychopath. I doubt we will ever truly know the number of people he has killed in his time until we catch him. Someone like this… just because he is not showing off his kills, does not mean they have not happened. I would not be surprised if there are kills attributed to others that are instead of the Chesapeake Ripper."

Hannibal realises now why Professor Graham had invited him to sit in on this lecture. The Chesapeake Ripper had been a topic of discussion a few times, though they had never delved further into it, as Graham was adamant about his own profile and Hannibal was enjoying antagonising him by bringing up the most ludicrous theories he could find and presenting them as factually and statistically-backed ideas, just to watch Graham's air of professionality slowly crumble away to reveal the discourteous, insolent true nature underneath.

And it isn't the quality of the analysis that drew Hannibal in. If he is being honest, it almost never is.

Will Graham, no matter how rude and brusque he is, has done something Hannibal thought impossible. He has *seen* him. And Hannibal resents him for that.

—

The coyotes grow more and more bold as time passes and Passion feeds them the remains of his prey.

Hannibal has come to learn much about his Passion over the months they have found each other, time and time again. The first thing was that, where Hannibal saw pigs, unworthy and unholy, only useful when he remakes them, Passion saw prey, something to hunt and kill, a game to win. It started with dogs.

Apparently, Passion owns many of them, and all of them adopted from those he killed. His first was in defence of a helpless young pup being abused by a cruel and drunken man, Passion was only young, only fifteen, but he talked about feeling the dogs pain and anguish, the pure terror and complete apprehension of the world around him.

It drove him mad, Passion called it. It drove him to kill, to ruin his own juvenile innocence in a fit of rage.

"Becoming. Not madness." Hannibal had said. "It may not have been glamorous, or dramatic in the way many stories are. But you kept the pup. And you kept killing."

In turn, Hannibal had begun to reveal certain truths about himself. Nothing that would incriminate him, of course, but there were certain thoughts that can only be revealed under the cover of darkness, to the nightmares who live there.

Once, while Passion fed the remains of a priest to the coyotes, and Hannibal sat nearby, diligently tripping the bones of a doctor, they deviated from their norm.

"There is so much hypocrisy in religion. No-one's goin' around sayin' what they mean about jack-shit."

"Organised religion seems to have been created that way. To control the masses one ceremony at a time. Are you religious?"

"Nah. Wasn't really raised that way, an' after everythin', didn;t seem right." Passion shrugs, and sits down next to Hannibal, Holding out the leg of the man and tugging ever so gently as a young coyote gnaws at the hand and barks softly, trying to initiate a game of tug-of-war.

"How can it not feel right? The bible often talks of how humanity was created in God's image. How each and every one of us is loved and moulded the way we are for a reason.

Taking free-will out of the equation, does this not mean that we are who we were always meant to be?"

"If that's so, it sure makes you wonder why it's considered a sin, don't it."

"It does. It also makes one wonder why sin was created in the first place, because even if Eve committed the first sin, surely it had to be created first in order for her to do so? Which begs the question of what sin is, because in our minds, is what we do ever truly sinful? We have no regrets, and there is nothing to stop us… Surely if God meant to make us a different way, He Himself would not enjoy killing as much as he does, for him to have a higher number of deaths attributed to him than the Devil himself." Hannibal may not be religious, but it would be remiss of him to refuse to read the Bible on that basis alone.

"The Devil was once an Angel."

"The most beautiful of them all. The Lightbringer. The Morning Star."

"The representation of all that's good, becomin' all that's evil. The downfall of free-will."

"I feel that is why there is something about the Devil that calls out to all of us. Calls to the parts we try to hide away, for one reason or another, that He wants to try and coax out of us, just to prove God wrong about his favoured creation. The Fall of Lucifer was the first corruption, and the first betrayal."

"You see yourself in Lucifer, don't you? You respect him, or your resemblance to him."

"You would be correct in that assumption, yes."

"So do I, Ripper."

—

For many reasons, Hannibal thinks that Jack Crawford was a very lucky man when Bella agreed to marry him. Not just because he has a beautiful, dedicated, intelligent wife whom he dotes on more than anything, but because her company vastly makes up for his own.

Had it not been for Bella Crawford, Hannibal may have killed Jack years ago. Other than Professor Graham, his rudeness is unparalleled when it wants to be.

Even Professor Graham can see it. Though that may be because Jack Crawford stormed angrily into his lecture theatre, dismissed everyone there without the authority to do so, and slammed a file down onto his desk without even a proper greeting.

"There's been another one."

Graham sighs, removing his glasses to wipe away some dirt from the lens soft curls falling in front of his face. “And what do you want me to do about that?”

“Come back to the lab with me. Look at the bodies. Let me borrow that *imagination-”* which is such a crude term for a gift such as Graham’s, Hannibal thinks. “- and solve this case once and for all!”

Graham patiently opens the file, flicking past the initial reports to the photos within.

Hannibal had spent hours scouring for pictures of canine skeletal structures so that his may resemble what it was supposed to, and it did. The sizes of the limbs and torso were off, but the anatomy was otherwise a correct interpretation with the tools he had on hand.

People do not make dogs very easily, was the conclusion of the hours of work invested into a project such as this.

He does not appreciate the way Graham eyes the photographs. It is examining, to the point of appreciation. As if even he does not understand the lessons of children in recognising when a gift is not for them, but for someone else. *Impudent pig.*

“This… It’s different. He isn’t simply performing for the sake of performing. The Chesapeake Ripper makes out his victims as pigs, and yet went out of his way to create a canine from this one. This isn’t the usual theatrics, this is *for* someone. A gift.”

“A gift? For who?”

“Well I don’t know, *Jack* , why don’t you go do your job, create your own profile, and find out.”

Agent Crawford leaves in a hiff, and Hannibal trails out behind him, leaving Professor Graham to bemoan the incompetence of the Behavioural Analysis Unit on his own.

When Hannibal was teaching later that day, seeing Graham at the back of his classroom, lurking in the corner, was a surprise. Hannibal has not invited him, and this was not a truly interesting subject for anyone outside of the field of Psychiatry. But Hannibal took it in his stride, giving his co-worker a nod for courtesy’s sake, and carried on per usual.

At the end of his lecture, after the last attentive and inquisitive students had left with their questions answered, Professor Graham made his own way to Hannibal’s desk.

“It doesn’t make sense.”

“What doesn’t make sense?”

“The gift. The Chesapeake Ripper’s Gift. Jack Crawford got it stuck in my head and I cannot stop thinking about it- the Ripper is not known for bonding with others, and I highly doubt he would be able to maintain a healthy relationship long enough to involve elaborate gifts such as this one, and yet it is the only reasonable explanation for the change in performance for the sake of performance to- to *this* !”

Graham was rambling at this point, and Hannibal had to step in to stop it.

“Is it yours to understand, or is this misunderstanding a part of the reason?”

“I- what?”

“Do you think that you are simply… missing something, or do you think that this is not something to be understood. Maybe the Chesapeake Ripper does not understand himself, which is why it is so confusing.”

“But we profiled him as conniving and intelligent. I doubt he would let himself lose so much control over his feelings for that to happen, Doctor Lecter.” Whether Professor Graham means to or not, the way the phrase ‘Doctor Lecter’ drips off his tongue is always coated in either flattery or condescending, as if titles are something that he does not truly understand, nor does he see the need to.

“I am sorry I cannot help you further in your investigation, Professor Graham.”

“It’s not really my investigation. But thank you for letting me bounce ideas off you anyway. I just need to get it out of my head and into the world to make sense of it sometimes.”

“I understand completely.”

“I still think that the Chesapeake Ripper being someone like Abel Gideon is a completely ludicrous idea. No one switches MO that quickly - serial cannibal, to family annihilator, to serial cannibal *whilst being incarcerated?* It’s ludicrous, even for the Chesapeake Ripper.”

And underneath all the traits Hannibal finds interesting, comes the Professor Will Graham who succeeds like no other at getting under Hannibal’s skin.

—

“Do you read the news, Ripper?” Passion’s voice floats through the silence in the air. This time he comes with beef, not human meat, though Hannibal can still smell the fresh blood coating him all over, and it reminds Hannibal why he is here tonight.

“Yes, I do.”

“Did you see that they showed off one of your kills. The Fed’s are callin’ it a gift for someone. Didn’t say who, though.”

“They do find themselves to be correct, sometimes.”

“They are?”

Hannibal hums affirmatively. Passion inquires after the gift, and how long it took him to create such a masterpiece, and sometimes, Hannibal is glad for these shared moments, where someone can appreciate his work fully and openly. Not just him, not just God and not just the pigs who became a part of the art that is more admirable than anything they would make in their own lives, but Passion himself, with a soft voice and sharp mind and worth so much more than anyone ever let him be.

Feeling that softness, the kind of softness that compliments the knives-edge point of Passion's capacity for violence, beneath the bark and bite and the harsh exterior, makes all of the effort worth it.

—

Hannibal had never given much thought to the passage of Time before, not beyond what was necessary. But His first year of teaching comes to an end, and he realises that time has… changed.

It seems to drag in the presence of Will Graham, making sure he is more than aware of every dreadful moment spent in his presence, that only seemed to get worse as the year went on. Graham actively sought him out just to incite a rise out of him in any way he could, and if it would not have been detrimental for him to do so, Hannibal would have slaughtered him months ago.

He imagines it, sometimes, the steady slide of his blade over pale skin. The way the blood would stain every surface, warm and slick. The beauty to be found when such a terrible thing is wrought in the eyes of someone else. Removal of the organs, one at a time: the lungs, the liver, the heart. Hannibal would take the intestines to make sausages from, give them to Passion to take home with him to feed the ever-growing collection of stray dogs.

Hannibal would invite Passion to join him on this, help him to hunt down the Professor and tear him apart. After Hannibal was done with his dissections, leaving the body open and gaping, with layers of fat and flesh painstakingly peeled back one by one, Passion could ravage and destroy it himself. He would have all the time in the world, to play with his prey.

Then he would come upstairs with a smile on his face, wearing unknown eyes and an unknown expression, though Hannibal can still feel the shape of his cheekbones and line of his jaw under his hands.

Passion would smile, and his teeth are stained red, and the blood is everywhere, over his shift and face and hands. Hannibal would softly tell him to wash up, and that dinner would be served by the time he is downstairs.

And it would be exactly what Passion and what the Professor each deserve.

There would be a sense of beauty too, because Passion is *beautiful* in a way Hannibal cannot describe. Earnest, but not to the point of naivety; Violent, but not to the point of senselessness; Empathetic, but not to those who do not deserve it.

He is perfect, and Hannibal cannot wait until his name rolls off Passion's tongue like it always belonged there, until he can wake up to the same view of soft hair and cool eyes, until they can share each other's everything until Hannibal is unaware of where he ends and Passion begins.

Bedelia can see that something has changed in him, over time. She would not be his therapist if she didn't. But she cannot put her finger on it, because she thinks him incapable of love, even in this form that blurs the lines between obsession, compulsion and devotion. So instead, she dances around the topic and investigates other parts of Hannibal's life, specifically his new found *'rivalry'* with a certain Criminal Psychologist.

"Do you think him to be unintelligent?"

"No. Professor Graham is the best in his field, and for a reason even I cannot dispute. He is a brilliant teacher, and a brilliant profiler, he is just… intolerable."

"You mention him seeking you out, specifically, and assuming that it is because he tries to get a rise out of you in conversation, and yet you continue to accept his invitations to sit in on lectures he holds."

"The debates we have, while irritating, are incredibly insightful and engaging, I can respect his intellect and academic worth without liking the man, Bedelia."

"And yet you don't respect him. You think of him as lesser because of his rudeness."

"IF he wants respect, he should give it."

And that was the end of that. Bedalia stopped trying to convince Hannibal he was wrong for his response to Professor Graham and they sat in a tense silence for the rest of the session, until Hannbal walked out and Bedelia poured herself a drink.

—

Dinner parties are a true chance to perform. It's a show with results that can be seen instantly in the gratitude and pleasure people take in the food they eat.

Hannibal doubts that they would react the same way if they knew what - or who - they are eating, but no one truly bothers to ask at this point.

This show is more intimate, just with some fellow Professors and others in the field. Professor Alana Bloom and her wife, Margot Verger are there, happily watching Hannibal's cooking and making idle chat between themselves, beers in one hand and interlaced fingers in

the other. Jack and Bella Crawford both made it, happy to watch from the sidelines and talk to Professor Graham, whom Hannibal only extended an invitation to out of politeness, having already invited their close colleagues and mutual friends.

Luckily, Graham knows how to conduct himself in company, and the only remarks made to Hannibal have been complimentary or inquisitive in nature. The perfect mask for a true masquerade.

Bella Crawford is slowly dying, hiding it from her husband.

Jack Crawford is losing himself in his work, and in the loss of Miriam Lass.

Margot Verger is planning on murdering Mason Verger as soon as her son is conceived.

Alana Bloom is plotting a takeover of Baltimore State Hospital by either murdering Fredrick Chilton outright, or decimating his career and forcing him to step down.

Hannibal Lecter is about to feed them the remains of Dorene Ibale.

The Masquerade Ball.

All those present have taken their places around the table, and their air is light with laughter brought out by strong wine and good food, when Alana says, “If someone like the Chesapeake Ripper can give someone a dog as a gift, I’m fairly certain making it to one dinner *we* invite you too is not that big of an ask, Will.”

“Dogs are a far superior present. And it is a rather large task when those dinners involve far too much Mason Verger for one to be truly comfortable.”

Margot smiles into her wine glass. “And if I were to…get rid of my brother? For a few hours, make him go do something else.”

“Then I would be far happier. Just don’t go complaining about the dog hair.”

Jack stops scowling uselessly at this point. “Might I ask, Doctor Bloom, why the Chesapeake Ripper is not the height of generosity?”

“I never said that, Jack. It was an absurd frame of reference that everyone would understand, that's it.”

Bella looks to her husband, giving him a look that portrays *‘Don’t you dare’* impeccably, but unfortunately, Jack does not listen.

“This so-called *gift* is not a good thing, For all we know, the Chesapeake Ripper is courting another serial killer we don’t yet know about.”

Graham snorts. “I doubt the Ripper left it as a gift for another killer. He does not like competition, let alone actively encourage it. It’s more likely someone else, who simply caught his interest, and is now the unfortunate object of his desire.”

“Speaking of gifts, this recipe is absolutely divine, Hannibal. What did you do with it?”

Bella changing the subject was about as subtle as Graham’s lies about the recipient of the Chesapeake Ripper’s gift, but appreciated nonetheless.

Hannibal confronted Graham about it afterwards.

“You don’t truly believe what you were saying, do you?”

Graham huffs out a laugh, taking a sip of his wine. They are alone in the kitchen, where Hannibal is starting to put away his utensils. “Of course I don’t, but I can’t have Jack Crawford knowing, can I?”

“No, I suppose not.”

“He’d never leave me alone if I started profiling for him again.”
“Then why did you analyse the Chesapeake Ripper in the first place?”

Graham shrugs. “I find him… interesting. There is something fundamentally different about him and every other serial killer I've been asked to analyse. I could never put my finger on it, but this latest kill has opened up some new doors for exploration, shall we say?” He puts down his glass and takes a seat at the kitchen island. “I think the Chesapeake Ripper is in love.”

Hannibal pauses for a second, before turning to look at Graham properly. “Really?”

“I don’t think the Chesapeake Ripper is a psychopath, and I never have. Not really. He might meet the criteria, but there is too much emotion other than rage in his kills to be simply psychopathic. He is something else entirely. Something we don’t have a word for. So while he may not be in love in the way most would perceive it, he is still in love with someone. And that changes things.”
“How so?”
Graham sighs, looking away. “How does the person he loves feel about him back?”

“I doubt that the Chesapeake Ripper would ever let who he loves be used against him, let alone known to the world, *Professor Graham*.”
“I know that, *Doctor Lecter*.”

“Hm.” Hannibal responded dismissively. It was getting late, and he required some down time to himself, with a book and a well-made drink.”

“I mean, how would someone- someone so pathetically *human* meant to compete with the Ripper.”

Hannibal freezes in place. “We are all human. Even the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“No. No, he’s somethin’ else.”

“Do you think so?”

“I know so.”

—

Professor Graham calls the Chesapeake Ripper simply ‘Ripper’.

The accent is failing. It’s fake.

It’s *fake* .

—

“What is your name?”

Passion shakes his head, in what Hannibal assumes is fondness. “I told you when we first met, Ripper, call me what you wanna. I’m honoured anyway.”

“That is not what I asked though, is it?”

“Forgive me for being slightly wary of givin’ my name to the Chesapeake Ripper.”

Happy barks and soft howling noises sound from the woods when Graham throws rib bones still covered in meat and blood into the wilderness.

“Don’t lie to me.”

“Can I tell you somethin’ first?” He does not wait for Hannibal’s response. “I love you too.”

The breath in Hannibal's lungs hitches, and his gaze snaps up to look at - truly look at - Passion’s face when he removes the mask.

Soft brown curls fall out of their hold.

Dark eyes, full of cold emotion, stare off into the distance.

The curve of his nose, the parting of his lips, and the way his eyebrows furrowed in confusion and distress are all the same.

“Doctor Lecter.”

“Professor Graham.”

—

The sharp, metallic scent of blood and the distinctive air of many, many dogs is what Hannibal wakes up to in someone else's bed, sometime around midday. There is an empty space on the bed someone else should be occupying.

A very much *human* someone else. Not his dog.

Hannibal drags himself out of bed, pulling on some soft trousers and shirt found laying around. His old clothes are still in the sink, in desperate need of some burning.

It wasn't just blood, but sweat and other, less savoury components belonging to the insides of another man, that he will no longer be missing, since he is dead.

One of said components left a bloodstain on the wooden floor, unfortunately. But it is only the bones of the man left, some discarded clothes and likely a head in the garden if the dogs did something with it.

Does Will's blood smell different to others? It might simply be Hannibal's personal bias, but there is something distinctive about the smell of his blood, and even the way it stains and tastes in his mouth.

"Good Morning, Hannibal. Just about, at least." His Passion, his Professor, Will Graham smiles at him from the small kitchen of his isolated house in Wolf Trap, Virginia.

The bruises to his face are still there, but are no longer swollen and starting to heal. He winces as he moves away from leaning against the countertop, having put pressure on the wound Hannibal inflicted last night.

The idea of Passion and the Professor being one in the same took some getting used to. Because of that, last night may not have been pretty by conventional standards, but it was breathtakingly gorgeous in the eyes of the only two people who mattered in that moment, and all moments thereafter: Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham.

"Hello Will." There is a warm, wet feeling against his fingers. "And hello to you too, Winston."

Will smiles. "I think he feels left out."

"When I awoke this morning, it was him on your side of the bed, so surely he cannot think he was entirely left out while we were asleep."

WIll just shakes his head, staring down at the dog at Hannibal's side. "Spoiled mutt, you are."

"Are you making breakfast?"
"I've put some coffee on, but I know you're… particular about your food. We have the ingredients in the house though." Hannibal appreciates the way that the cruel and cold glint in

Will's eye can only be caught under certain circumstances, and Hannibal's presence seems to be one of them.

The idea of Hannibal's cooking seems to be another.

"Well, shall we go see what I have to work with then?"

"We shall."

Hannibal walks towards the kitchen, slowly looping his arm around Will's waist, and wonders what sort of egg would go well with sausages and bacon, courtesy of one Randall Tier.

End Notes

how many synonyms for 'rude' can i fit into one fic challenge

chat fic coming soon! probably! maybe!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!